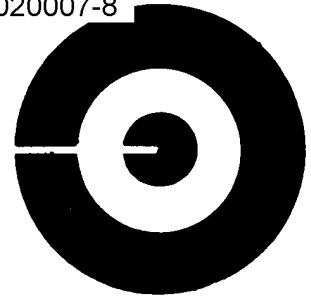


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DEBOD REPORT



Published by **ACCURACY IN MEDIA, INC.**
1341 G Street, N.W., Suite 312
Washington, D.C. 20005 • Telephone: 202-783-4406

Reed Irvine, Editor

\$1.00

June-A 1983

XII-11

THE SILENT TREATMENT FOR SAKHAROV

President Reagan proclaimed May 21 "Andrei Sakharov Day," honoring the brilliant Russian physicist and Nobel Peace Prize winner who languishes in internal exile in the Soviet Union. Sakharov, the father of the Soviet H-bomb, has long been a leader of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts, but the Soviets responded by sending him off to the city of Gorky in January 1980. Gorky is off-limits to Westerners, and Sakharov is effectively cut off from contact with Western reporters, as well as other human rights activists.

In 1981, Sakharov attracted worldwide attention to his treatment by going on a hunger strike that lasted 17 days. Since then he has suffered two heart attacks. In proclaiming Sakharov Day, President Reagan said that Andrei Sakharov's bold and penetrating voice is in danger of being stilled. He said, "Not only is he denied his freedom, but his health is in danger, jeopardized by constant harassment and lack of decent medical attention." But it is not only his harassment and his health that is silencing Sakharov. The American media are falling down in their job of keeping the burning issue of the shameful treatment of this great man by the communists a burning issue. The reporting of the proclamation of Sakharov Day is a case in point.

The network television evening news programs completely ignored President Reagan's action and moving appeal on Sakharov's behalf. The New York Times found that it could spare only one-column inch on page A9 to cover the story. The Washington Post, whose chairman had just proclaimed it to be a newspaper that strives for "accuracy, fairness and completeness," did twice as well. It devoted two-column inches to the story. It reduced a 480-word UPI story to 65 words, omitting the President's eloquent praise of Sakharov as "a man of uncommon courage and decency who speaks for those in the Soviet Union and elsewhere who yearn for fulfillment of their human rights." It also omitted his appeal for Sakharov's freedom, in which he said, "The world needs his learning, his wisdom, his nobility."

The Washington Times Does Better

Other newspapers around the country that we saw did no better than The New York Times and The

Washington Post. The one exception was The Washington Times, a new daily which just celebrated its first anniversary. It reported President Reagan's action proclaiming National Andrei Sakharov Day in a 240-word story, which it followed up the next day with a powerful editorial and a profile of Sakharov.

Its editorial said: "It behooves Americans, so profoundly favored in this vicious world and often so complacent in our rare fortune, to reflect on the continuing ordeal the Soviet Union is visiting upon those of its citizens who are audacious enough to defy totalitarianism. Sakharov is a poignant symbol of the courage such defiance requires—and the crushing callousness with which the communist state responds to such courage." It added that President Reagan had said that the treatment of Sakharov demonstrates that the communists "are aware of the shakiness of their rule and the fragility of their claims of legitimacy, and that is why they seek to stifle dissent." Many in the media were outraged when in a recent speech President Reagan described the Soviet Union as the "focus of evil" in the world. But when the President cited as evidence of that evil the treatment of Andrei Sakharov, our big media ignored his words.

The same silent treatment was given to the program sponsored by the International Sakharov Committee at the Kennedy Center in Washington on May 20. The program featured a brilliant concert by the Soviet Emigre Orchestra and Renata Babak, who formerly starred with the Bolshoi Opera Theater and who was the first Soviet singer to defect to the West. There were speeches by Cong. Tom Lantos, Paul Weyrich, president of the Free Congress Foundation, Reed Irvine, chairman of Accuracy in Media, and Nicholas von Mach, one of the organizers of the newly formed Resistance International. Again, only The Washington Times publicized the event.

Irvine's Remarks

Addressing the audience that filled the Terrace Theater at the Kennedy Center, Reed Irvine pointed out that the failure of the American media to cause President Reagan's tribute to Sakharov to reverberate throughout the land could have tragic consequences. He noted that Sakharov's wife, Yelena Bonner, had recently said that

if Western interest in her husband diminishes, the secret police "will one day come and kill him." It was therefore important for the President to proclaim Sakharov Day, but that action, Irvine said, is to some extent negated by the non-response of most of the media.

AIM's chairman pointed out that Sakharov is well aware of the importance of obtaining the cooperation of the Western media in the difficult struggle for freedom in the Soviet Union. He cited the message that Sakharov sent to the International Sakharov Hearings held in Washington in September 1979. Sakharov said that "openness and publicity" should be the main weapon in the defense of human rights. The hearings brought together many victims of communism, prominent Soviet exiles, who gave expert testimony on the suffering of those doomed to life under communism. Sakharov said: "I hope that the mass communications media, including Western radio stations broadcasting to the Soviet Union, will devote their attention to the hearings and will convey detailed information about them to people living in the West, in the USSR, and in Eastern Europe."

That hope had been disappointed, Irvine said. Our media virtually ignored the hearings, leaving the participants disappointed and angry. Vladimir Bukovsky, who had spent a major part of his life in Soviet prisons or psychiatric wards for dissidents, commented acidly that The Washington Post had relegated a story on the hearings to a part of the paper devoted to "vogues and fashions." "We are not a fad or fashion," he said. The story was not a serious article. Irvine pointed out that three months later Sakharov was arrested and sent off to exile in the closed city of Gorky.

Why Such Perverse Journalism?

Why would a paper that professes dedication to the cause of human rights brush off the proclamation of

Sakharov Day with a 65-word condensation of a wire service story? Irvine said: "Three days earlier this very same newspaper (The Washington Post) had carried a front-page story about a local woman who had done something truly remarkable. She had written a letter to Yuri Andropov criticizing American policy, and it was published in Komsomolskaya Pravda."

Irvine suggested that the answer might be found in a letter Sakharov had smuggled to the West from his exile in Gorky which had been published in The New York Times on June 8, 1980. In it he warned of the great influence of the KGB in influencing the West.

He said: "The West is filled with citizens who by reason of their positions are able to promote Soviet influence and expansionist goals." Some, he said, were motivated by idealism. Others act as they do because it is fashionable or profitable. A third category, he said, "consists of naive, poorly informed or indifferent people who close their eyes and ears to the bitter truth and eagerly swallow any sweet lie." "Finally," he said, "there is the fourth group—people who have been 'bought' in the most direct sense of the word, not always with money. These include some political figures, businessmen, a great many writers and journalists, government advisers, and heads of press and television. Overall, they make up quite a group of influential people."

In his letter, Sakharov warned that the West faces "very difficult times and cruel cataclysms" if it failed to "show the required firmness, unity and consistency in resisting the totalitarian challenge." Irvine was warmly applauded when he told the Kennedy Center audience, "I say to you tonight that we will not successfully resist that challenge as long as our people are misguided and confused by a press that is flabby at best and at worst fickle in its commitment to the great cause of human freedom."

THE POST ROAST

"Quality is an ever-present goal as we exercise the craft of journalism. It's reflected in the pursuit of accuracy, fairness, completeness and truth." So said Katharine Graham, chairman of the board of the Washington Post Co. at its annual shareholders' meeting on May 13, 1983.

Mrs. Graham was asked repeatedly about stories that had appeared in The Washington Post and Newsweek, and about some that had not appeared. It was suggested that if these publications were pursuing accuracy, fairness, completeness and truth they were frequently failing to catch up with them.

Arnaud de Borchgrave, the co-author of *The Spike*, the novel that made disinformation a household word, started off with the following statement:

"I'm sure it will come as no surprise to the management of the Washington Post Company if I tell you that Newsweek's treatment of the Hitler diary forgery has deeply shocked the journalistic fraternity—not to mention the public at large. Nothing like it has been seen since the Janet Cooke scandal in The Washington Post. If any high-ranking government official had been guilty of such a grievous error of judgment, The Washington Post

would have demanded his or her resignation. The so-called 'Hitler Diaries' were palpable forgeries from the word go, and I said so publicly on radio and television three hours after the story first broke. Not only did Newsweek's two top editors decide to devote a 13-page cover story to the scam, but the 39-column story itself repeatedly conveyed the impression that the diaries were authentic. This is a clear case of unaccountable media power out of control. The Sunday Times apologized for buying into the scam; two top editors of Stern resigned for their part in perpetrating the scam, and the reporter responsible has been fired and is being sued by his former employer. Bob McCloskey, The Washington Post ombudsman, was appalled by Newsweek's conduct. Nowhere in its follow-up cover story did Newsweek acknowledge that its original cover misled its readers. Newsweek even went so far as to say that the diaries were of tremendous historical significance, whether they were genuine or not. That is the most ludicrous statement I have ever seen in Newsweek, and I spent 30 years on the magazine. I have seen four Newsweek editors fired over the last 10 years for what were minor misdemeanors compared to this latest scandal. So my question to the management of

AIM Report

**NOTES FROM THE EDITOR'S CUFF***By Reed Irvine*

June-A 1983

ATTENDING THE ANNUAL SHAREHOLDERS' MEETINGS OF CBS, RCA, ABC AND THE WASHINGTON Post is one of the most interesting things that I do for AIM. Our brief reports of these meetings in the AIM Report generally don't do them full justice. In this issue we report on The Washington Post meeting, which is always lively. Arnaud de Borchgrave attended to ask how come no editor was being fired at Newsweek to atone for the way the magazine played the forged Hitler diaries. Newsweek had made the particularly asinine statement that it almost didn't matter if the diaries were genuine or not. Surprisingly, Mrs. Katharine Graham echoed that, saying, "It was an interesting story whether they (the diaries) were true or false." Forgery stories may be interesting, but The Washington Post has not always been so unconcerned about having been taken in by a hoax. I recall that in 1971, The Post fell for a joke that William F. Buckley, Jr. pulled in National Review. He had published excerpts of what purported to be additional Pentagon papers, with tongue in cheek. The Post took them seriously and ran a news story about these new secret documents. They were furious when they found they had fallen for a fairly transparent practical joke. The anger was so great that a few weeks later The Post refused to report a statement issued by 11 prominent conservatives announcing that they were suspending their support of President Nixon. The reason was that Bill Buckley was one of the eleven!

OTHER CRITICISMS MADE AT THE POST MEETING WHICH WE HAVE NOT COVERED IN THIS REPORT include: (1) The failure of the paper to carry a report on the presentation of the \$170,000 Templeton Prize for contributions to religion to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and his acceptance speech in which he discussed, among other things, Soviet influence in the anti-nuclear campaign; (2) The spiking of a Jack Anderson column which identified Sen. Edward Kennedy and several liberal Democrats as having been accused of involvement in drug use on Capitol Hill; Ben Bradlee said the column was killed because the charges were unsubstantiated, but I pointed out that The Post had earlier printed five Anderson columns in which Sen. Strom Thurmond was charged with taking a bribe and this was on the basis of the unsubstantiated statements of a man under indictment for fraud and with a reputation for telling wild stories (a Justice Dept. investigation cleared Sen. Thurmond); (3) the failure of The Post to provide its readers with an adequate report of the misdeeds of CBS News as revealed in the Benjamin report after having published several stories taking the side of CBS in its controversy with Gen. Westmoreland.

MURRAY BARON, THE PRESIDENT OF AIM, MADE A STATEMENT AT THE POST MEETING IN WHICH he said, "I am here today to support the visiting of chilling effects upon the media." He explained that when a newspaper's counsel advised against running a story because it might be libelous, the reporters and editors were "appropriately chilled." He noted that the "criminal and civil law is, in essence, a codification of chills." He said, "Feverish journalism breeds chills....How long do you think the public is going to abide by the double standard so palpable now, so that when it is established that Gen. Westmoreland is, indeed, the victim of a conspiracy, not the practitioner of a conspiracy--a conspiracy by CBS documentarians, the cry of 'chilling effect' goes up." Mr. Baron said, "If you're saying to the public that if we are not shown to have exercised malice or reckless disregard of the truth, we can defame...then you have defamed this remarkable enterprise known as the free press."

I STILL HAD SEVERAL ISSUES TO RAISE WHEN MRS. GRAHAM ADJOURNED THE MEETING. ONE was The New Republic's criticism of the award of a Pulitzer Prize to Loren Jenkins of

The Post for his coverage of "the invasion of Beirut and its aftermath." Martin Peretz, the publisher of The New Republic, had showed that Jenkins' reporting was badly flawed by error and distortion. It is interesting that The Post in a full page ad boasting of the two Pulitzer Prizes it won, incorrectly said Jenkins' prize had been given for his coverage of "the invasion of Lebanon and its aftermath." Jenkins had not covered the first phase of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the Pulitzer Prize committee had been precise in honoring him only for the Beirut phase. Joshua Muravchik, who has published a detailed criticism of The Post's coverage of the war in Lebanon, suggests that the ad was a deliberate effort to claim that its coverage had been vindicated by the Pulitzer Prize committee.

THE NEW YORK TIMES HAS NOT YET APOLOGIZED TO DR. EDWARD TELLER AND OTHERS WHOSE good names it smeared in the story by Jeff Gerth that we discussed in our last issue. They declined to run a letter from AIM which answered the many errors and false insinuations in Gerth's story about Teller and other shareholders in Helionetics Inc. After having smeared these men in a lengthy front-page story on April 28, The Times said nothing more on the subject until May 20, when it ran on page D3 a short story headlined, "An Adviser to Reagan Cleared." The story reported that the White House had looked into The Times' charges against Dr. Teller and had found no evidence of any impropriety on the part of Dr. Teller. It said that Dr. Teller, a member of the White House Science Council, had followed proper procedures in listing his holdings of Helionetics stock on a government disclosure form and there was no reason to believe there was any connection between a rise in the price of Helionetics stock in the week prior to President Reagan's speech recommending an anti-missile defense system and Dr. Teller's advice on that subject.

THE NEW YORK TIMES WAS SLOW TO FOLLOW UP ON GERTH'S APRIL 28 SMEAR OF DR. TELLER, but the Soviets were not. The very next day Radio Moscow broadcast worldwide a commentary based on the story in The Times. Repeating and embellishing Gerth's false statements and innuendo, Radio Moscow said: "If we dissect a political decision in the U. S., a political doctrine and so on, we will always see that there are concrete people with direct connections to the administration, or to some powerful circles, who stand to benefit from it financially. Depending on how serious a deal is, the financial stake may range from thousands to millions of dollars. Bribes to Japanese officials in the Lockheed scandal were in the millions. Edward Teller's payoff from Helionetics is close to a million....Space wars was a hot-selling item on American television, and the administration has made the first step to make them a reality. It was condemned by millions around the world and applauded by a handful of those who have already pocketed millions of dollars in stock of the Helionetics company."

WHAT THE NEW YORK TIMES ONLY DARED IMPLY, RADIO MOSCOW BOLDLY MADE EXPLICIT. THE Times had a duty to correct this atrocious smear and repudiate the use the communists have made of it. It has failed to do so. AIM decided to take dramatic action. We have contracted for one full page in the national and international editions of The Wall Street Journal on May 31 to publish a personal statement by Dr. Teller. This demolishes The Times story. The headline reads, "I Was NOT the only Victim of The New York Times." Dr. Teller notes that what The Times did to him is not unique and that many people suffer from this kind of journalism. It will cost AIM \$72,531 to publish this statement. If you agree with me that it's worth doing, please send a contribution to help defray the cost.

To: AIM, PO Box 28390, Washington, D. C. 20005

() Enclosed is \$_____, my tax-deductible contribution to help pay for the ad in The Wall Street Journal. () Please send me a copy of the ad.

Name _____

Address _____

City, state, zip _____

The Washington Post Company is whether any editor at Newsweek who was responsible for this fiasco has submitted his resignation. If not, does management plan to dismiss the editors responsible? And if not, why not?"

Mrs. Graham: The answer to your question, Arnaud, as you know, is that no resignations have either been submitted or asked for. The editors' statements, and I agree with them, is that the diaries were an interesting story—that it was an interesting story whether they were true or false, and, of course, you have to ask the question, were they forgeries. But the fact that they had surfaced and they were circulated was made a cover story. It also ran on the front page of The New York Times for several days. It ran on the front page of most other publications, and the decision to make it a cover story was a decision which I wouldn't disagree with."

Reed Irvine: I'm surprised that you would defend it. It was obviously a terrible *faux pas*,...Mr. Maynard Parker (editor of Newsweek), on the night before the German government revealed the evidence that these were terrible forgeries, said on Hodding Carter's program, "Inside Story," that these diaries were a find of tremendous historical significance that would make a great story, and that's why they played it that way. Obviously they were not a find of tremendous historical significance, and, as Arnaud said, they were a tremendous embarrassment to anyone who considered them in that light. While Newsweek alerted us to the fact that they weren't authenticated, (Newsweek was) certainly leaning heavily in that direction....I think that Mr. Parker, who put himself way out on that limb, certainly made himself very vulnerable....I suggest that maybe you need a new editor of the month at Newsweek.

Mrs. Graham: We disagree.

Did the Judge Vindicate Post Reporting?

Shareholder Lester Kinsolving, a Washington journalist, noted that after Judge Oliver Gasch reversed the \$2 million judgment against The Washington Post in the libel suit brought by William Tavoulareas, the president of Mobil, executive editor Ben Bradlee said, "We are delighted our reporting was vindicated. It's a great day for newspapers." Mr. Kinsolving pointed out that Judge Gasch had said of the story over which Mr. Tavoulareas sued, "The article falls far short of being a model of fair, unbiased journalism." He asked if publisher Donald Graham believed that this was vindication of The Post's reporting.

Donald Graham: The Tavoulareas suit is not at an end, and I want to keep my comments brief. Let me read you a couple of sentences from Judge Gasch's opinion. In his conclusion he said, "As discussed above on this motion for judgment notwithstanding the verdict, the evidence of this trial must be construed in the light most favorable to the plaintiff (Tavoulareas). With this in mind, the court has thoroughly reviewed the massive record in this case and has concluded that there is no evidence to support the jury's verdict." Yes, if a libel

verdict could stand when there was no evidence to support it, that would be a bad day for newspapers, and the overturning of such a verdict is, in my opinion, a good day for newspapers.

Kinsolving: . . . Are you proud of that when the judge rules that it falls far short of being a model of fair, unbiased journalism, or is that irrelevant, Don?

Donald Graham: The judge said many things in his 23-page opinion, and I will be very happy . . . to supply you with a copy of it so you can read in full everything that he said about that story.

After Mr. Kinsolving said Don Graham was ducking the question, Reed Irvine asked if it wasn't true that Judge Gasch reversed the verdict because he felt the evidence did not show that The Post had acted with malice, i.e., reckless disregard of the truth. That is quite different from saying the story was accurate. Allan Finberg, the secretary of the company, confirmed that the judge's opinion did not address the question of whether the story "was true or false, defamatory or not."

Scandalmongering by The Washington Post

Mr. Irvine pointed out that three scandals that The Post had generated between December 1982 and March 1983 had proven to be based on inaccurate information. These involved the Legal Services Corporation board, Interstate Commerce Commission member Fred Andre, and the Canadian propaganda film flap. These three cases were discussed in the March-B 1983 AIM Report and had been the subject of a letter AIM had sent to Mrs. Graham in which we asked why The Post felt it necessary to rush into print with such inaccurate and unfair stories. That letter, dated March 8, had not been answered as of May 13. Mr. Irvine described the cases discussed in the letter, and added yet another—the recent spate of stories alleging misconduct by the Interior Department in leasing coal fields in Wyoming. The Post had made much of an alleged leak of information that some said should have been countered by cancellation of the bidding for the leases. Irvine pointed out that a story in The Post that morning had disclosed that there had been no leak. The information that The Post thought had been leaked had actually been issued in a public announcement available to all. Irvine noted that the disclosure of the non-existence of the leak came in the 18th paragraph of a 20-paragraph story.

Don Graham was asked to respond. After apologizing for not having replied to AIM's letter, he said: "I just want to say in general rebuttal that I really don't agree with Reed's characterization of those stories, and I would point out that what those stories tend to have in common is that, that, indeed reporters—that I said at this meeting a year or two ago, immediately in the aftermath of The Star going out of business, that we took very seriously our responsibility to listen to criticism of us. We had instituted this unusual ombudsman policy, putting on house someone whose sole job is to listen to reader complaints of inaccuracy and unfairness and write about it in the newspaper. And in each of those three cases, when people wanted to

criticize our coverage, whether they were syndicated columnists—we sometimes print letters to the editor of people submitting guest columns—we went out of our way to print them. You now characterize this as rebuttal of the news stories in the first place. In fact, we do our best to print criticisms of our stories and of our reporters and of our columns, and we will continue to, but by printing a letter or a column in commenting on one of our stories, Reed, we no more—we emphatically do not—.”

Asked if that meant he was standing by those original stories, including the stories about the Legal Services Corporation board which had been proven incorrect by two official investigations, Mr. Graham said: “Well, I will make only one comment on the Legal Services story, which is that you characterized it as a story that we rushed into print. Our first day story was coverage of the Congressional hearing on the Legal Services Corp., and the front-page story on that day consisted almost entirely of quotes from Republican members of Congress about the behavior of people on the Legal Services Corporation board.”

It is true that The Post story quoted two Republican congressmen. What it failed to report was the refutation at the same hearing of their inaccurate statements. Irvine asked again why The Post reporters couldn't take the time to get their facts straight before rushing into print with baseless stories that damaged reputations. Mrs. Graham responded: “I think we most often and almost always do check...”

No Blacks and Helping Reds

The Washington Post is strong for affirmative action for racial minorities and women, but it has no blacks on its board and only one woman, Mrs. Graham. This was brought up by Les Kinsolving, who nominated a black, Robert Maynard, publisher of the Oakland Tribune, for a seat on the board and challenged the directors to explain why they did not vote for Mr. Maynard. None would do so. Corporate secretary Allan Finberg said, “The question is only burning you, Mr. Kinsolving.” Mr. Irvine said Kinsolving had raised a valid question. He asked why the board was all white and why Mrs. Graham was the sole female director. Mrs. Graham said there was no reason for it, except that no directors had been added since Mr. Robert S. McNamara, the former Secretary of Defense, joined the board last year. Mr. Irvine suggested that they might have given Mr. McNamara's seat to a well qualified black such as Andrew Brimmer, a Washington economist who formerly served on the Federal Reserve Board. Mrs. Graham said the question would be taken under consideration.

Irvine asked if Mrs. Graham and the editors of The Post agreed with British journalist and author Philip Knightley who has said that if it is true that the reporting on Vietnam had caused the failure of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, the toppling of a president, and the deplorable conditions that prevail in Indochina today, that was not too high a price to pay for freedom of the press. Mrs. Graham said she did not agree that the reporting was responsible for all that, and she would not answer a hypothetical question.

Irvine then suggested that the same thing was now happening in Central America. He said the Washington Post reporting had contributed to the communist take-over of Nicaragua and that it is helping the spread of communism to other countries. He asked if this is what The Post wanted. He pointed out that The Post's foreign editor, Karen DeYoung had taught a course at the leftwing think tank, the Institute for Policy Studies, in which she had said, “Most journalists now, most Western journalists, at least, are very eager to seek out guerrilla groups, leftist groups, because you assume they must be the good guys.”

Don Graham said this was unfair to The Post's reporters and to the paper's commentary, which he said tried to reflect all points of view. “As to the news coverage,” he said, “I refer you no further than the front page of this morning's paper.” This was a reference to a story headlined, “Salvadoran Guerrillas Execute 18.” Irvine said the story was defensive in tone. That was exemplified by the use of “execute” rather than “massacre.” The story had explained that the guerrillas had broken “with their widely publicized humane treatment of prisoner policy” and had explained that they couldn't pardon the victims because many of their own people had died in the fighting. He said the tone of the story would have been quite different if this had been an action of the Salvadoran army. He cited as another example, the reporting last December of the deaths of 75 Miskito Indian children in Nicaragua from the point of view of the Sandinista regime, ignoring the statement issued by the Indian council of elders.

Don Graham said: “I can't stand here and be able to debate individual news stories some months after they were published.” Les Kinsolving suggested that Mrs. Graham should lift her ban on executive editor Ben Bradlee's attendance at the annual meeting and let him respond to questions about news coverage. Laughter filled the room when Mrs. Graham replied, “Well, I just think it's dangerous.”

Except for Arnaud de Borchgrave's criticism of Newsweek, none of this was reported by The Washington Post, the paper that Mrs. Graham says strives for accuracy, fairness, completeness and truth.”

What You Can Do

Write to Mrs. Katharine Graham, Chairman, The Washington Post Co., Washington, D. C. 20071. Suggest that she can best prove her dedication to accuracy, fairness, completeness and truth by dismissing the editors of Newsweek and The Washington Post, who have shown their contempt for those standards in their handling of the forged Hitler diaries and the fake scandals stirred up by The Post.

AIM REPORT is published twice monthly by Accuracy In Media, Inc., 1341 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, and is free to AIM members. Dues and contributions to AIM are tax deductible. The AIM Report is mailed 3rd class to those whose contribution is at least \$15 a year and 1st class to those contributing \$30 a year or more. Non-members subscriptions are \$35 (1st class mail).
